

# **NORTH PARK MINI-PARK & ASSOCIATED STREETScape IMPROVEMENTS**

WBS #: S-10050

## **CITY OF SAN DIEGO**

*Public Works Department, Architectural Engineering & Parks Division*

### **COMMUNITY MEETING #1: VISIONING & DESIGN WORKSHOP**

Saturday, June 4th, 2011 ♦ 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Claire De Lune Coffee Lounge, 2906 University Avenue

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## **S U M M A R Y**

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### **Introduction**

On June 4, 2011, the City of San Diego Public Works Department convened the first community meeting for the North Park Mini-Park & Associated Streetscape Improvements Project. The purpose of the meeting was to (a.) introduce the project and explain the planning process; (b.) orient participants to the study area; (c.) review and discuss findings of the existing conditions analysis; (d.) develop project vision(s), priority improvements, distinguishing features, and maintenance ideas for the study area; and (d.) discuss next steps in the design process.

### **Meeting Outreach**

To engage the wide range of stakeholders and interests in the community, the City of San Diego employed a multi-pronged outreach approach to notify and engage participants in the meeting, including:

- Distribution of a meeting notice to approximately 1,100 property and business owners and tenants surrounding the study area;
- Distribution of a press release to local organizations including:
  - neighborhood media outlets,
  - community based organizations, and
  - planning groups and committees;
- Display of the meeting notice on community boards, storefronts and at the project site; and
- Direct communications with key stakeholders, such as Jefferson Elementary School officials, property owners within the study area, and other related City departments.

## **Meeting Format**

Approximately 44 community members attended the meeting at the Sunset Temple Ballroom, Claire De Lune Coffee Lounge, 2906 University Avenue, San Diego, CA 92104. Upon signing-in, participants received an agenda and a walking tour guidebook and comment card for submitting written comments from the meeting.

Todd Schmit, Park Designer with the Public Works Department, Architectural Engineering & Parks Division, initiated the meeting by welcoming participants, introducing himself as project manager for the project, and providing a brief overview of the project purpose and background. Mr. Schmit then introduced Councilmember Todd Gloria, Council District 3, who provided welcoming remarks and thanked participants for their involvement.

Andy Pendoley of MIG, Inc., part of the project's consultant team, served as meeting facilitator and provided an overview of the meeting objectives and agenda. He then reviewed the planning process including the initial community engagement activities completed to-date, as well as the major activities that are forthcoming, including two additional community meetings to occur at a future date. Finally, he oriented participants to the walking tour guidebook and comment card, explaining that participants would break into three groups led by project team members.

After participants completed the walking tour and reconvened in the meeting room, Mr. Pendoley introduced Mukul Malhotra, Director of Urban Design and Project Manager with MIG, who presented a slideshow featuring findings from the existing conditions analysis, including urban design, traffic and circulation, infrastructure, soils, potential improvement framework, potential mini-park and streetscape elements, and site opportunities and constraints. Mr. Malhotra paused at key points throughout the presentation, and Mr. Pendoley facilitated discussions with participants about their reactions to the findings based on their knowledge of the study area and their experience on the walking tour. During these discussions, Mr. Malhotra recorded participants' comments on a large wall graphic about their perspectives on a vision for the project, issues and challenges, and opportunities.

Mr. Pendoley then requested that participants form into breakout groups of 8-12 people to further develop an overarching vision, and to identify priority improvements, maintenance strategies, and distinguishing features for the project. Each group was facilitated by a project team member and used large printouts of maps of the study area, tracing paper, flipchart paper, markers, pens, images from the slideshow, scissors, and tape to record their discussion and ideas.

Upon reconvening in the large group, a representative from each breakout group presented a brief overview of the group's key discussion points about their vision, priority improvements, maintenance strategies, and distinguishing features. In addition, to collecting the breakout groups' notated maps and flipchart pages, Mr. Malhotra recorded highlights from the presentations on the wall graphic, and participants submitted written comments via comment booklets, all of which are summarized in the following sections.

## **Vision**

Participants discussed their vision for the study area.

- Reflects the community's authentic character:
  - Historic
  - Family-oriented
  - Artistic
  - Urban
  - Diverse
  - Pedestrian-friendly
  - Bicycle-friendly
- Applies unifying design themes and elements
- Enhances community connectivity and wayfinding between residential, business and school areas
- Promotes vitality in the business district and for the theatre
- Encourages bicycles and walking in the community
- Features sustainable design elements
- Allows for co-existence of different uses
- Provides community safety and park safety by encouraging consistent usage (i.e., "eyes on the street")
- Maximizes existing resources including available funding and community assets
- Solves drainage issues
- Fosters an active community
- Avoids impacting existing parking
- Creates a desirable park space
- Provides for educational opportunities

## **Assets**

Participants discussed the available assets in the study area.

- Diversity and proximity of uses: entertainment, commercial, arts, education, residential, and services
- Authentic, vital, cohesive and diverse culture
- Community support for the arts and preserving historic character
- A central, under-utilized space for a park

- Funding for the project design and construction (partial)
- Under-utilized parking garage to accommodate growing parking demands
- Active biking community
- Wide right-of-way (streets)
- Jefferson Elementary School facilities
- Accessible to freeways
- Affordable housing

## **Challenges**

Participants discussed the challenges in the study area.

- Addressing access to the adjoining properties and their uses (e.g., trash receptacles and fire safety) on the north side of the park area
- Reducing street parking and impacts to local businesses and Jefferson Elementary School
- Accommodating multiple desired uses for the park from multiple interest groups including residents, businesses, children, the arts community, and more.
- Creating a safe environment through design and programming, including high visibility, night security, and “eyes on the street”
- Improving storm water controls
- Designing around above-ground utilities, or undergrounding
- Accounting for noise and disturbances affecting neighboring residents
- Balancing the needs of automobile, pedestrian and bicycle traffic, while improving overall traffic safety
- Enhancing awareness of and access to the parking structure
- Integrating with the existing artistic and historic character of the surrounding community
- Applying an appropriate mix of plant and tree species

## **Priority Improvements and Opportunities**

During the breakout group discussions, participants identified their top five priority improvements for the project. Collectively, these priority improvements are summarized as follows:

- Create multi-purpose use adjacent to the theatre such as performing arts space or stage area
- Widen sidewalks, particularly from the edge of the park site to expand the park’s footprint and promote connectivity
- Realign traffic flow on 29<sup>th</sup> Street as one-way northbound, including a pedestrian-friendly promenade design adjacent to the theatre, continued access to the alley on the north side of the parking garage, and continued large-truck and public safety access
- Redesign the streets as “greenways” that are integrated and connected

with the park design through unifying elements such as trees, landscaping, and paving, particularly North Park Way, Granada Avenue, and 29<sup>th</sup> Street

- Realign traffic flow on North Park Way as one-way westbound
- Improve street and park lighting
- Improve storm water runoff facilities
- Apply sustainable landscaping
- Implement maintenance strategies that are sustainable and feasible
- Develop a cohesive and integrated public art program that considers a range of elements, including but not limited to:
  - Fountains
  - Kinetic art
  - Wall murals
  - Sculpture
  - Existing and surrounding context
  - History
  - Educational and interpretive

#### **Additional Opportunities: Mini-Park Site**

Participants identified a wide range of additional opportunities for the park site.

- Develop the park as a gathering space, providing spaces for seating
- Provide spaces and features for a range of users:
  - Passive uses (e.g., picnics, lunch breaks, gathering)
  - Active uses for children and adults
  - Events (e.g., outdoor movies, festivals, farmer's market)
  - Outdoor cafes and vendors
  - "Speaker's corners"
  - Dog area
  - Bicycle access and storage
- Consider a range of sustainable design elements
  - Rainwater harvesting
  - Storm water capture
  - Recycled water use
  - Native/drought tolerant landscaping
  - Composting/recycling
  - Solar lighting
  - Green walls
  - Fruit-trees/edible/vegetation landscaping
  - Art that supports sustainability message
- Emphasize "greening" and landscaping
  - Native species
  - Trees
  - Shrubs

- Turf
- Green walls
- Fruit-trees/edible/vegetation landscaping
- Community gardens
- Shade
- Unifying and connecting surrounding areas
- Consider installing safe and maintenance friendly restrooms or comfort stations
- Consider building at a higher elevation for enhanced storm water runoff

### **Additional Opportunities: Streetscapes**

Participants identified a wide range of additional opportunities for improving the streetscape of 29<sup>th</sup> Street, North Park Way, Granada Avenue and Utah Street.

- Improve overall traffic safety with a strong emphasis on pedestrian and bicycle safety, access and experiences through a range of possible improvements:
  - Narrow the street right-of-way for automobiles
  - Reduce or remove the amount of street parking by accommodating with the parking garage
  - Consider a range of street parking designs including reverse/pull-in parking and parallel
  - Improve vehicle signage and way finding, particularly for access to the parking garage
  - Integrate pedestrian design elements such as crosswalks, bulbouts, landscaping, special paving, planter boxes and shade trees where needed and feasible
  - Install four-way stops at North Park Way and Granada Avenue and North Park Way and 29<sup>th</sup> Street
  - Underground utilities currently located on sidewalks and in the public right-of-way
  - Install lighting
  - Complete the continuous bike lane on Utah Street
- Integrate new, cutting-edge, demonstration/pilot technologies such as:
  - Rainwater harvesting and storm water capture
  - Solar lighting
  - Low-water landscaping
  - Urban gardens and orchards
- Improve pedestrian safety near Jefferson School
  - Enhance and expand the crosswalks at Utah Street and North Park Way
  - Consider relocating the student drop-off/pick-up area from Utah Street to 28<sup>th</sup> Street in coordination with school administrators
- Integrate design elements that celebrate the historic character

- Promote community-activated, shared uses such as community gardening
- Apply landscaping as noise buffers between the park site and adjacent residents on North Park Way and Granada Avenue

### **Maintenance Strategies**

Participants identified potential maintenance strategies for the mini-park and streetscapes. The majority of suggestions emphasized the proposed North Park Clean and Safe Overlay Maintenance Assessment District, which provides maintenance resources beyond the City of San Diego's standard streets and parks resources. Additional suggestions include:

- "Adopt a park" programs
- Low maintenance design elements
- Partnership and sponsorship programs with schools, businesses, and community organizations
- Probation work crews

### **Next Steps & Close**

Mr. Schmit closed the meeting by thanking participants for their time and encouraging their attendance at upcoming community meetings.